

The Crittenden Press.

15.

Marion, Kentucky, Thursday, Jan. 3, 1907.

Why the Pole is not Reached



Peary has again tried for the pole and again failed.

Wellman, on Spitzbergen, waited in vain for a favorable wind in which to head his airship for the same glistening goal.

Only a few days ago, at an European congress of Arctic explorers and devotees, two men announced their intentions of starting soon for that eternally frozen end of the earth.

Authorities on polar exploration say that to-day there are scores of small expeditions, heard of and followed only by scientists, distributed about the Arctic circle, and nearly all buoyed by the hope of ultimately making, or pointing the way to, the pole.

For four hundred years, nearly, man has been lured into the pitiless depths of the white north by this same hope.

For the past fifteen or twenty years there has been among explorers what may properly be termed Polar mania. Peary, Wellman, Nansen, Andre, the Duke of Abruzzi, Captain Sverdrup, Anthony Fiala—Americans, Englishmen, Germans, Italians, Scandinavians, Russians, Belgians, Frenchmen, Danes, and Peary's negro, have set their faces sternly and stoutly toward the pole—and failed to reach it.

Why? Because, in brief, nature, in her cruellest, most sterile mood, has set an impassable barrier between the children of men and the pole?

The poetic answer would be, Yes. The prosaic, truthful answer is, Because no man who has gone for the pole has been backed by sufficient money to enable him to "nail" the flag of his country on it, metaphorically speaking.

To put it more bluntly, if man had not been so stingy with his money these last four hundred years, the pole, in all probability, would have been discovered long ago.

So declare the leading polar authorities—Peary, Nansen, the Abruzzis and all the rest. And they have reason on their side, however strange their bald statement may seem to a layman, taught from childhood that it has been the cold that has kept man from the pole since the beginning of history.

But—suppose a modern miracle were to happen—a multi-millionaire were to dedicate his entire fortune to the discovery of the pole. Why, straightway the whole method of polar exploration, as practiced these several centuries past, or

the better part of them, would be changed entirely, "in the twinkling of an eye."

There would be no more "dashes" for the pole. "Dashes"—what a familiar word in connection with polar exploration! Do you know why explorers have invariably "dashed" for the pole? Because they have never had enough money back of them to enable them to go for the pole with that slow but sure persistence that is all-conquering. The word "dash" itself suggests limitations. The explorer is ever conscious of the fact that he has just so much, or, more properly speaking, just so little, money back of him. He knows that it will last just a certain prescribed period. And so he establishes a base—remember, a base—and one day he begins his "dash" for the realization of his life's dream against, yes, against the bitter cold and the coming of the Arctic night, but, above and beyond all, against the vanishing of his little hoard of the thing that talks everywhere in this world, even close to the shadow of the icy pole itself.

Instead of the "dash" there would be "plugging" of the most prosaic sort. With millions back of him, an explorer would take an army of men into the far north. He would provision and equip it after the fashion of an army of soldiers sent to the besiegement of a strong citadel. There would be vigilantly kept open

a line of communication with civilization, storehouse for the expedition's wants. Instead of one base, or two bases at most, there would be a base every few miles, well garrisoned, well stocked, excellently provided with men and equipment of every conceivable sort to be used on a moment's notice. And these bases would hold the country, after

the manner of forts and bodies of troops left behind in conquered country by an on-sweeping enemy.

Too, each base would be in communication with all the others; this communication would be so organized as to be uninterrupted, even by the fiercest of Arctic blasts. And as the main body crept further and further north the num-

ber of bases would grow in direct proportion to the total distance covered, possibly faster.

As a besieging army creeps systematically upon a city, almost imperceptibly at times, at other times finding it necessary to bring up troops from the rear or to send back for fresh munitions, at still other times suffering temporary setbacks, yet militant and confident of ultimate victory through it all, because of strength and that open line of communication, and an inexhaustible war chest, so the expedition would creep close to the pole. Then, and only then, somewhat after the fashion of besiegers at last keyed up to the pitch of storming a city's gates because of very proximity to them, there would probably be a real "dash" to—not for—the pole. What a short "dash" it would be, and how pre-eminently successful! It would simply be a foot race on the part of the vanguard to see who would be the first to throw his arms lovingly around the fearfully frigid thing.

In the same fashion the south pole would be brought within the domains of civilization.

Now, when you stop to think of it, there is nothing preposterous in all this, is there? Rather, is there not all reason and all common sense in this that the polar people say?

The unreason comes in in the way that the average polar expedition has been equipped and started out since the days when man first began to hunt the ends of the earth.

In all that time only two expeditions have sailed for the polar seas in a ship especially built for polar exploration. One was Nansen's expedition; he went in the "Fram." The other has recently

returned from the north—Peary's; he went thither in the "Roosevelt."

What sheer foolhardiness to start out in vessels wholly unfit, even when tinkered with, to withstand the onslaught of the ice packs and the angriest of seas! And yet, what sublimity! Men, knowing full well the unfitness of their bottoms, still turn their faces northward unhesitatingly, putting their lives in jeopardy for possible fulfillment of a dream!

This is not all. Men have gone poleward illy provisioned, because their money supply was scant. Hardly an explorer has left civilization with all the scientific instruments absolutely needed to make the expedition a success scientifically, though no pole is reached. Until recent years no expedition had sufficient money to buy the services of more than a handful of the very helpful and essential Eskimo. But still the pole has lured all of them, and with stout hearts, throbbing high with hope in spite of every discouragement (greater hope than the Arctic explorer has no man), they have tried for the pole, and many, a very great many, considering the number of possibilities, have reaped the penalty of hope more wonderfully glowing than the Aurora Borealis itself. It is the same as the wages of sin.

What picaresque sums of money have been handed out (that's the right expression, "handed out," as you would hand out a slice of bread and cold meat to a tramp) to the brave darers of the bitter north.

To Nansen, mostly by the Norwegian government, \$125,000, to build and fit out the "Fram" for her famous drifting expedition which landed him "farthest north." Suppose he had had ten times that sum at his disposal, would "farthest north" have been that point in deed and truth?

The second time the "Fram" poked her nose into ice packs the leader of the expedition, Captain Sverdrup, had something less than \$50,000 at his disposal.

The money that Peary had back of him on each of his expeditions that are now history was reckoned in five figures. Do you recall the very hard time this indomitable "down-easter" experienced in obtaining enough money to fit out the "Roosevelt" when she lay at her dock

in the harbor of New York? The latest expedition was of all the hundreds of the pole. Yet not a put up to enable Peary ward all the things that ment and wide expe should be taken. It short of half a million me \$500,000," Peary "and I will reach the

With that sum of money he would doubtless give a guarantee to

"But why," you ask, Peary, or some one else half a million, or a million—any sum of money sure the finding of the the good of finding it, it is found, what is with it?"

A great many people these allied questions, self answer them in to a gathering of Berlin geographers when he preparations for his ward:

"My polar creed can be held by many myself, from that typical American pen down.

"The north pole is As a matter of acc knowledge, as a prize worth the struggle for it has four centuries. It is the sign of man's glo" (non-attainable as both to our "our alleged ability

"The attainment of cularly an object of and patriotism. The world segment is our ultimate destiny. isthmus and the poling for the isthmus mark the pole. Me want the pole, pole, and because practically all the tions of the world for it for nearly have not got it yet. it will be the crow turies of effort did heroism."

Half a million—no matter who monied man who rolling down the the man who at Let the gentlemen select from the man with coupled for all